The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting and concerning to the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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FACING the FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

It is authoritatively reported by Mr. Louis Stark in the New York Times that President Roosevelt's decision to appoint a new Labor Board to mediate disputes in defense industries was due mainly to the fact that he has begun to "veer away from considering strikes in their quantitative aspect and to regard them qualitatively."

If that is true, it is good news. Viewed quantitatively—that is, from the point of view of their number and size—the strikes which have occurred to date have been inconsequential. But viewed qualitatively—that is another and more significant story.

Even a casual review of the history of defense strikes shows first of all that the great majority of them have been called by CIO unions. There have been only a few strikes by AFL unions.

When we examine these disputes more closely we find that the CIO strikes have been more bitter and more prolonged than those attributed to AFL unions. For the most part the AFL strikes have been settled quickly and satisfactorily to all concerned.

The Communist Method

The President's new mediation board will find that this is due to the fact that the CIO strikes have been mainly "organizational" in character. In other words, the unions involved were trying to organize the workers by the strike method. This is a questionable method. It is of Communist origin. It has been followed by the CIO ever since the "sit-down" days.

The strategy of such strikes is simple. In the first place, the union organizes only a small minority of the workers in a plant. With this nucleus it calls a strike and imports pickets to make it effective. In short, the majority of the workers are locked out by an active minority. Then the union, through the CIO, immediately seeks to exert pressure on the Federal Government to bring the employer into line and have him sign an agreement which he recognizes the CIO union as the bargaining agency for his employes.

When the industry involved is vital to national defense, it can readily be seen how both the Government and the employer—by noting of the majority of the workers—are likely to fall victim to such intimidation because of their anxiety to maintain production without interruption.

In view of these circumstances, as pointed out by Philip Murray, the CIO puppet president, bitterly opposed the new mediation board up to the last minute. A union which calls a strike without members, a union which has primary objectives in recognition, a union which has no claim on the one allegiance, and respect of the workers involved in a strike, has no leg to stand on in court. And the mediation board is nothing like a court. It will not, and cannot stand for intimidation from any source if it is to function effectively.

AFL Takes Patriotic Stand

Continuing to examine defense strikes from a qualitative standpoint, it will be found that most of the strikes called by AFL unions were for the purpose of obtaining increased wages or better working conditions. In such strikes collaboration is the natural means of settlement. Once the facts in the case are clearly established it can be determined to what extent the union demands are justified and should be met by the employer.

In this connection, we want to point out that the American Federation of Labor's Executive Council was the first to recommend creation of a defense labor mediation board. The council pointed out that during the last war the Government created a War Labor Board which functioned effectively and kept industrial strife down to a minimum. It urged the appointment of a similar board in the present defense emergency.

President William Green presided over the council by inform. ing President Roosevelt at a White House conference the other day that the AFL whole-heartedly supported his plans for a new Board.

By taking this position, President Green and the Executive Council served notice on the entire country that the American Federation of Labor is sincere in its patriotic policy of seeking to prevent strikes in defense industries. The American Federation of Labor said to the people of America:

"We do not want strikes. When differences arise, we are willing to submit our case to an impartial Federal agency for settlement on the merits. We are anxious to cooperate to the fullest extent in the defense program."

We leave it to the public to figure out what the CIO policy of opposition means.

Gov. Lehman and Other Notables Urge Greater Aid to British Labor

New York, N. Y.—Declaring that "English workers have been waging an epic battle of courage and selfsubmission," Governor Lehman told the Aid British Labor Conference of the New York Trade Union Committee for National organization that "they deserve our support and encouragement because they have enlisted in the crusade to maintain the ideals of liberty which they and we alike hold."

The conference called by the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor, of which William Green is honorary chairman and Matthew Woll, chairman, heard addresses by former Justice Jeremiah T. Mahoney; Samuel Shore, Vice President of the Amalgamated W.U.; Luigi Antonini, State Chairman of the American Labor Party; Friedrich Stampfer, former Editor of the Berlin Daily Forward; Friedrich W. Gehle of the British War Relief Society; William Collins, New York representative of the American Federation of Labor; Morris Feinstone, Secretary of the United Hebrew Trades, and Louis Hollander, Vice President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Matthew Woll, Vice President of the American Federation of Labor, presided.

The conference was endorsed by the Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York, with an affiliated membership of 750,000.

Messages of greeting from President Roosevelt, Mayor LaGuardia, Senator Lehman, Governor Charles Poletti and Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the British Trades Union Congress, were read.

President Roosevelt in his message stated, "I am glad to greet the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor. I wish it Godspeed in its efforts to encourage and sustain their British brethren in the struggle to maintain these institutions of freedom on which as Americans, we base all of our happiness as a nation."

Governor Lehman, in opening the meeting, declared that it was the purpose of this conference and of the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor, to "coordinate the separate activities of trade unions and other labor organizations who are today aiding Britain, and to draw into the movement those unions that have wanted to help but did not know what to do up to now."

He stated that the committee sought to develop a powerful movement of aid to British Labor so that the "roots of American Labor in this critical period shall be an imposing and creditable one." Italian-American labor organizations are aiding British Labor, "not because they love the Englishmen less, but because they love democracy more."

William Green sent a message regretting his inability to attend the meeting, but asked that he be allowed "to join with all those in attendance at your meeting in extending to British Labor and the British people the assurance of the citizens and members of the American Federation of Labor of our support and cooperation and of our admiration of the courage and heroism they are showing to the world, and of their devotion to the principles of freedom and democracy."

A resolution adopted by the assembled delegates of labor unions and fraternal organizations, stated that "this conference recommends to organized labor throughout the country that a voluntary contribution be made to the end that by June 1941 that will be worthy of American Labor, in this crucial period of struggle of British Labor."

The resolution warned "that the year 1941 is without doubt the most critical year of labor in the struggle to maintain these institutions of free-

SEABROOK FARMS SIGNS MEAT CUTTERS CONTRACT

Philadelphia, Pa.—An agreement giving a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor a closed shop has been signed at the big Seabrook Farms near Bridgeton, N. J.

The contract, signed by Charles F. Seabrook and Local 56 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, was the first agreement with a trade union. It embraces more than 400 workers on the 80,000-acre farm and packing plants, including laborers, packers, pickers and other workers.

The agreement, said to be unique in labor annals, gives farm workers a guarantee of year-round employment during the busy harvest season, according to Leon B. Schachter, business agent of Local 56. In addition, Schachter said, farm workers will get a week's vacation with pay—almost unheard of in the agricultural industry—and overtime wages from 10 to 20 per cent, provision for free meals and farm clothing to farm workers during the harvest season, the closed shop, seniority rights, promotion, preference and guarantee of their jobs during military service or up to a year's illness.

Strikes are prohibited, banning strikes. There is also a provision under which the union is authorized to issue work permit cards to temporary seasonal help.

Int'l Harvester Employes Unions Are Chartered by the A. F. of L.

Washington, D. C.—President William Green of the American Federation of Labor announced that union charters have been issued to employes in various divisions of the International Harvester Company by the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Green predicted that the 47,000 employes of this company would become organized into the American Federation of Labor within a short time.

The organization drive is under the direction of Francis P. Fenton, National Director of Organization of the American Federation of Labor. After attending a series of mass meetings of International Harvester employes throughout the mid-west, Mr. Fenton reported to Mr. Green that even those hitherto members of CIO unions are flocking into the American Federation of Labor ranks. He said that the great majority of the International Harvester employes felt they had been "sold out" by the organization of CIO members who called strikes in order to intimidate management into bargaining with them as representatives of all the employes.

Mr. Fenton declared that the American Federation of Labor already has filed petitions with the National Labor Relations Board for employe elections at the McCormick, Wood Pullman and Rock Falls divisions of the International Harvester Company and that additional petitions soon will be filed for the Farmall, Milwaukee, E. Moline and Rock Island divisions of the same company.

At one of the mass meetings he attended in Chicago, Mr. Fenton said 2900 International Harvester employes voted unanimously to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor and go back to work despite a strike called by the CIO.

At the E. St. Louis, Illinois, division Mr. Fenton said 2700 members of the CIO union, at a mass meeting, voted two to one to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor.

Mrs. Roosevelt Warmly Praises Principles of Organized Labor

Every workman should have the right to join a union, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the President's wife, declared in her "My Day" column copyrighted by the United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Explaining that she wanted to tell how she felt about labor organizations, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote:

"To me organization of labor seems necessary because it is the only protection that the worker has, when he feels that he is not receiving just returns for his labor or that he is working under conditions that he cannot accept as fair. I also feel that dealing with unions is the best way to benefit the employer and make for better mutual understanding.

"Having, in all my principle, however, does not mean that I think the decisions made by groups of workmen or their leaders are always correct. I do not expect from them infallibility and superhuman qualities any more than I do from groups of employers or from politicians or from government officials.

"There have been and are abuses in the labor movement and I think we should fight them. The people who uncover these abuses and speak fearlessly about them show courage and perform a civic duty. I think, however, they fail in their duty when they do not point out that it is only the abuses they attack, not the idea and fundamental right of organization for mutual support.

"A union organization fails in its full duty when it loses the ideal which lies back of all unionization. This ideal, it seems to me, is an unselfish interest in those who are not as strong as others in their ability to defend themselves and in a willingness to suffer to obtain for others the rights you may have already achieved for yourself.

"I do not believe that every man and woman should be forced to join a union. I do believe the right to explain the principles lying back of labor unions should be safeguarded; that every workman should be free to listen to the plea of organization without fear of blacklisting, in spite of circumstances, and that he should have the right to join with his fellowmen in a union if he feels it will help others and, incidentally, himself."

Federal Guarantee of Housing Loans To Operative Builders Hit by Bates

Washington, D. C.—In a statement presented to the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, Harry Bates, chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Federation of Labor, tentatively opposed the bill which would authorize the Federal Housing Administration to guarantee loans to operative builders instead of home buyers in communities facing housing shortages in the national defense activity. The proposal recommended to Congress by the Defense Housing Coordinator and embodied in H. R. 3509 would do away with the present requirement for the 10 per cent cash payment now necessary to acquire a home under FHA mortgage insurance and by making mortgage loans available to builders rather than home owners, would eliminate the standard test of eligibility a prospective home owner must now meet.

Stating that, "The American Federation of Labor is willing and ready to cooperate with the President of the United States and every agency of Congress for defense housing. In any housing program authorized by Congress," Mr. Bates pointed out that the proposed program, which gives full protection to lending institutions and to speculative builders, offers no protection to defense workers persuaded to buy homes on the strength of a temporary employment emergency, would leave these workers and their families "holding the bag" when the emergency ended.

Stating that, "The American Federation of Labor is definitely opposed to any housing program which would encourage, in any way, the purchase of a home by workers in communities facing housing shortages in the national defense program, unless adequate protection is given to the workers against the hazards of unemployment," Mr. Bates stated:

1. It promotes jerry-building and by placing no restriction on the sale price or rent charged, it offers a premium for the speculative builder to take advantage of housing shortages and bill defense workers by charging excessive prices or exorbitant rents.

2. While the Government takes all risk out of speculative building in defense areas by its guarantee, it permits increased interest charges and thus adds incentive to profiteering.

3. It provides no plan to take care of the workers when the housing shortages but leaves the operation of the defense housing program to the initiative and whim of the speculative builder in the situations in which the builder finds prospects for excessive profits attractive.

4. The bill provides no protection for legitimate private enterprise in the home building field, which is already given ample protection under the present FHA program, but merely offers incentives for the building speculator to come into the defense housing field.

5. It would serve to undermine home ownership by taking advantage of the temporary employment of defense workers and by inducing these workers to abandon home ownership when such attempt is certain to end in default on payments, eviction, and the loss of the workers' equities in the property he had believed to be his.

6. It fails to provide minimum standards of sound construction and durability and minimum wage standards in the building of defense housing for workers.

7. At the end of the emergency the housing authorized by this proposal is bound to depress real estate values in the community and will force the Federal Government to take the loss and take over all distress housing built during the emergency boom.

J. F. McCREERY TO RETIRE; VETERAN CARMEN'S LEADER

Kansas City, Mo.—The official journal of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America announced that J. F. McCreery of Paducah, Ky., in point of service the oldest craft president of the Carmen, will retire on April 1.

Mr. McCreery is a genuine veteran of the railroad labor movement. Starting as a leather worker and a member of the Leather Workers Union he decided to try railroading in 1900 when he was only 20 and secured a job in the car department of the Illinois Central at Paducah where the Carmen had just established Paducah Lodge No. 14, which he immediately joined.

In 1909 the Illinois Central System Federation was formed with Mr. McCreery as its president. Gradually the federation idea spread over the country and in a modest way did the work now performed by the Railway Employes Department of the American Federation of Labor.

Elected a vice president of the Carmen's Brotherhood at the Milwaukee convention in 1912 Mr. McCreery was reelected at each subsequent convention and now has 28 years of service in that capacity.

AFL INSURANCE AGENTS WIN ANOTHER ELECTION

Washington, D. C.—Officials of the American Federation of Industrial and Ordinary Insurance Agents reported another victory for the union when the agents employed by the Virginia Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Richmond, Va., voted by secret ballot to have the American Federation of Labor represent them in collective bargaining with the company. The vote was 37 for the A. F. of L. and two against.

News Briefs

STREET RAILWAY UNION WINS WAGE BOOST AWARD

Allentown, Pa.—The decision of an arbitration board granted employes of the Lehigh Valley Transit Company operating in and around Allentown, Easton and Bounderton an increase of 10 cents an hour, raising their hourly wage rate to 70 cents, and a 19 per cent increase to all other employes. The award also included provisions for one week's vacation with pay and time and a half for overtime. The employes are members of Divisions 169, 964 and 856 of the Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employes of America. The award was made retroactive to June 1, 1940, and will result in the men's receiving back pay amounting in many cases to over $150.

LARGE WAGE INCREASES GAINED BY MACHINISTS

Washington, D. C.—The International Association of Machinists announced that wage increases totaling several million dollars annually had been gained in contracts signed in a few months by more than 35 employers, many of them in defense industries.

Among the more favorable agreements was the one negotiated with the Curtiss-Wright Airplane Company of St. Louis, Mo., which provides increases in pay of 3 to 17 cents an hour for 89 per cent of the employes, several thousand employes, plus many improvements in work conditions. By the summer the agreement will cover 10,000 workers.

TWO SWIFT PLANTS SIGN BUTCHER WORKMEN'S PACT

Chicago, Ill.—President Patrick E. Gorman of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, announced the signing of two agreements with Swift & Co. The agreements, executed at Seattle, Wash. and Portland, Ore.

"The contract has agreed to a five day work week, with increases to all employes from 2½ cents to 10 cents per hour," Mr. Gorman said. "Minimum rates at both places have been established at 55 cents per hour for women and 65 cents per hour for men. The usual vacations with pay, seniority rights, guarantee time and other beneficial features are included in both contracts."

MICHIGAN POWER COMPANY SIGNS ELECTRICIANS PACT

Washington, D. C.—Officials of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers expressed themselves as pleased with the collective bargaining agreement the IBEW has signed with the Consumers' Power Company of Michigan which ended an acute controversy verging federal mediation.

Following intervention by the National Defense Mediation Board, a warning by Governor Murray D. Van Wagoner that the utility plants seized by the State if necessary to secure continued operation, the company yielded and granted the IBEW a 5% wage increase, aggregating a total payroll boost of $375,000 annually.

$75 FINE FOR VIOLATING N. J. CHILD LABOR LAW

Newark, N. J.—Acting Judge Thomas Guthrie in the First Precinct Court here fined the owner of a stationery store $75 for working a 13-year-old girl from 9 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, with but a half hour for lunch, six days in January and paying her at the rate of $5 a week.

The fine under the State Labor Department said this was the first conviction of the kind by the State child labor law, which became effective last September 1, prohibiting child labor for all persons under 16 years of age in agriculture or certain jobs like shoe shining or selling magazines, and prescribed a fine of $25 a day for violation.

PAY ORDER BENEFITS 1,100 RUG WORKERS

Approximately 1,100 workers in the carpet and rug industry were benefited by the wage order which went into effect on March 17 fixing a minimum wage of 40 cents an hour for the wool division of the industry and 35 cents an hour for workers employed in the "other than wool section." The order was issued by Wage and Hour Division of the U. S. Department of Labor, which estimated that the rest of the workers in the industry, numbering 5,000, or seven 29,000 and 30,000, are paid higher rates than these two minimums.

JOBLESS CUT FIFTY PER CENT

Portland, Ore.—State and Federal officials reported unemployment in Oregon fifty per cent reduction in the number of unemployed workers in Oregon had occurred during the last year. The decrease was attributed to a general industrial boom and additional defense contracts. A year ago the Oregon unemployed number 55,000. Now, according to the report, there are only 32,000 unemployed including workers who have jobs on WPA projects and other Federal work.

AFL Supports President's Plan For Federal Mediation Board

U. S. COURT UPHOLDS A. F. L. AUTHORITY

Washington, D. C.—The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that decisions of the American Federation of Labor are the supreme authority in jurisdiction disputes involving affiliated unions and that unions affected cannot seek judicial relief.

The court ruling was made in the case of a dispute between the International Union of the United Brewery, Flour, Cereal and Soft Drink Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters over the jurisdiction of brewery truck drivers. The convention of the American Federation of Labor decided in favor of the teamsters. The Brewery Workers took the case into the Federal courts and secured an injunction from Associate Justice T. Alan Goldsborough of the U. S. District Court handing jurisdiction to the A. F. of L. from enforcing its decision.

The Court of Appeals, in its decision written by Associate Justice Miller, decided that the American Federation of Labor proceeded in accordance with its legal rights in the jurisdiction case and overruled the injunction granted by Justice Goldsborough.

WEST VA. AND INDIANA LEGISLATE FOR LABOR

After two months of bitter battles, legislatures in two states—Indiana and West Virginia—adjourned with encouraging victories for organized labor.

Two vicious anti-strike bills, as well as a so-called "anti-sabotage" proposal, backed by the chief defense would have shackled workers' rights, were buried in the final session of the Indiana legislature.

In West Virginia labor did even better.

Many pro-labor measures were put through, such as substantial increases in unemployment compensation benefits; a better pension law for teachers; a "little Hatch Act" to bar political assessments on state employes, and a law to take politics out of the schools by requiring selection of school boards on a non-partisan ballot.

However, the fight for a "little Wagner Act" and a "little Wage-Hour law," was lost.

KNITGOODS WORKERS WIN WAGE BOOST AGREEMENT

New York, N. Y.—After a three-week strike against the May Knitting Mills, Inc., and the Pilgrim Knitting, Inc., the Knitgoods Workers Union, Local 155, an affiliate of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, gained an agreement providing for substantial increases in wages, vacations with pay, and a closed union shop.

Drive Against Industrial Hazards Launched by Boilermakers Union

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, with the assistance of the U. S. Department of Labor, has initiated a nation-wide campaign to eliminate dangerous occupational hazards that cause many deaths and disabilities among welders.

Secretary William E. Walter of the Boilermakers pointed out that fumes let off by welding inside of boilers, ship tanks and the holds of ships have taken a heavy toll of men. Railroad workers working inside of locomotives have also been affected, he said. "The situation is getting more serious daily," he declared. "Welding has become more and more a hazardous occupation." The fumes have been due to the coatings, paints and mixtures used on metals in recent years, Zimmer pointed out. Chemical changes caused by welding on such surfaces in confined spaces have produced the gases.

A few haphazard studies of the dangers have been made by industrial experts, but little has been done so far in the way of preventive measures, Zimmer said. Very few state

Green Says Set Up Will Include Public, Labor and Employer Representatives

Washington, D. C. — President Roosevelt announced at a press conference that he has decided to appoint a new Federal Mediation Board to settle strikes and disputes that may occur in defense industries.

William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, declared after a White House Conference with the President that the AFL wholeheartedly favors the creation of such a board. He said the Executive Council urged the President to take such action at its February meeting.

Mr. Green also disclosed that the new board will have seven members, three representing the public, four representing labor and four from industry.

It was reported in the press that the two representatives of the American Federation of Labor on the Board will be Secretary-Treasurer George Meany and Vice President George Harrison. The CIO also will have two representatives on the Board even though the organization has bitterly opposed its creation.

Bernard Baruch has been prominently mentioned as a possible appointee for chairman of the new Board. He headed the War Industries Board in the last war.

However, as this edition went to press, the President had not yet officially designated his appointees.

The Mediation Board will be established by Executive Order, no legislation being required because the President has full powers under existing law to set it up.

Mr. Green said he understood the new body will be clothed with full authority to investigate and mediate labor disputes in defense industries but that any arbitration proceedings will be on a strictly voluntary basis.

It is believed that the creation of this board will go a long way toward maintaining industrial peace in the nation and will prevent serious interruption in defense production. If it functions effectively, there is every likelihood that critics of labor will be hard put to find cause for complaint for legislation to shackle and restrict labor unions.

In its resolution of last February, the Executive Council pointed out that during the last war there was set up by Presidential Executive Order a War Labor Board which by its efforts succeeded in keeping strikes and industrial disputes down to a minimum. The Executive Council said it saw no reason why a similar board should not be created now to mediate disputes in defense industries.

It is believed that this recommendation was the first step in bringing about President Roosevelt's decision to create the new board.

During the past few days President Roosevelt has consulted with members of the Office of Production Management, the National Defense Advisory Commission, the Secretary of Labor and officers of both the AFL and the CIO. The only one to express opposition to his plan was Philip Murray, CIO head.

150,000 OFFICE WORKERS COVERED BY MASS. ORDER

Boston, Mass.—Ending a year of investigation and public hearings, the Massachusetts State Minimum Wage Board announced its approval of a minimum weekly wage of $16 for experienced office workers and $15 for inexperienced office workers in the State. About 150,000 office workers are affected by the ruling.

The decision was regarded as a great victory for the American Federation of Labor because the petition for a minimum wage decree was first filed by the Local 16498 of the Stenographers, Typists, Bookkeepers and Assistants Union and the campaign to bring it about was actively supported by A. F. of L. organizations in the State. Aaron Valleman, an A. F. of L. organizer under New England Organization, Director John J. Murphy, was a member of the Industry Board appointed by the State Minimum Wage Commission to investigate conditions of office workers and report recommendations. The C. I. O. formed a rival office field triad to form a group in the office field triad to form in on the picture but its efforts were ineffective.

The minimum wage decree stipulates that no deductions can be made from the minimum wages without the consent of the employe and the commission.